

# Learn Local Awards

# 2021

Friday December 10, 2021



Proudly brought to you by the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board



Education  
and Training

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## Chairperson's Message

On behalf of the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2021 Victorian Learn Local Awards.

The Awards have a proud history of celebrating the significant contribution the Learn Local sector makes to individuals, communities and industry across Victoria. This year is no exception as we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Awards.

Since 2006, the Awards have recognised over 350 individuals, programs and providers of the Learn Local sector. I have had the pleasure of being Chairperson of the ACFE Board for over three of those years, and I am still amazed by the dedication, responsiveness and innovation of our sector.

Indeed, this year we have several new award categories, including the Victorian Learn Local Leadership Award and the Victorian Learn Local Innovation Award.

Despite the challenges of the past two years, our sector remains resilient, and continues to change lives. We take great pride in supporting learners to achieve their learning goals and to develop the skills they need for study, work and life.

On behalf of the Board, thank you to our Learn Local providers for another fantastic year. What you do has



a life-changing impact on people's lives. Each and every day, you help people to pursue their goals and dreams and make their lives better.

To our partners, thank you for your support and collaboration.

To our learners, you are at the heart of everything we do. Congratulations on your achievements, we are proud of you and wish you every success.

Today we celebrate just a few of the success stories, but we know that across Victoria there are hundreds more stories that could be told.

Thank you all for your support of the Learn Local sector, for your contribution and wonderful work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria Peters'.

**Maria Peters**

Chairperson Adult, Community and Further Education Board

## Minister's Message

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*Gayle Tierney*

The Hon. Gayle Tierney MP  
Minister for Training and Skills  
Minister for Higher Education

# The Ro Allen Award – Learn Local Pre-accredited Learner (Skills for study and life)

This award recognises the achievements of adult Victorians that have developed the core skills they needed for study and/or life. The award will go to a learner, who has achieved at least one of the following, as a result of their participation in one or more ACFE Board funded pre-accredited programs (Learn Local courses) in 2020: Developed the literacy, numeracy and/or English language skills they needed to participate more fully in the community and/or to enter further study, and/or developed the literacy, numeracy, English language and/or digital skills they needed to successfully complete accredited training they were already undertaking.

The learner will have established pathways for themselves into further education and/or volunteer roles. They will have demonstrated a high level of engagement with their learning and will have been actively developing new skills and enhancing their knowledge.

The learner will demonstrate a commitment to continuing their learning journey and be a role model for other people to show what can be achieved by participating in a Learn Local course.

The winner of this award will receive \$5000. Up to three finalists for this award will each receive \$1000.



## Omer Ntunzwenimana

**Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council**

As a refugee arriving in Australia from Burundi three years ago, Omer had to face more than leaving his home country, settling in a new one, and learning a new language. He also had to overcome a severe leg injury that left him unable to walk.

In March 2020, Omer started attending the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council's Conversation English and Reading Café Class, where local volunteers talk to learners wanting to practice their English in ten-minute rotations. Learners receive not only English conversation and reading guidance, but an important opportunity to socialise. Omer surprised his trainers in quickly developing from a shy learner with low confidence in his English-speaking skills to a confident speaker and rapidly improving reader.

His journey continues to astound those around him: not only has he been accepted into LaTrobe University to study a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Sociology, but through surgery and rehabilitation he has begun to walk again. Omer now proudly talks about his future plans, including the dream he had almost forgotten – to one day work for the United Nations and be able to help his fellow countrymen in Burundi.



## Alexis Smith

**Cire Services Inc.**

Alexis's learning spans all aspects of her life and is driven by a commitment to self-development as she makes the brave social transition as a trans woman. In 2020, she participated in four Learn Local courses covering literacy, cooking and hospitality, financial literacy and numeracy, employability and personal skills. The huge range of classes that Alexis enrolled in was matched by her ambition to succeed. She had the highest attendance level of any of Cire Service's pre-accredited students, despite the challenges posed by her courses moving to online learning methods during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Her personal development has also been clear for those who know her, as she has exhibited increased self-reliance, problem-solving and planning skills. Most significantly, she has grown in confidence to live in harmony with her identity and likes to share her story in affirming and creative ways. Recently, Alexis submitted an entry into the National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) where she converted a 1,500-word assignment into a 37,000-word story that she continues to develop.



## Hussnia Hussain Ali

### Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

Hussnia arrived in Australia as one of the first refugees from Afghanistan's Hazara community to settle in Bendigo. Early on, she experienced loneliness in a new culture in which she couldn't speak English. On top of this, she had to overcome the social isolation that can come from being a primary carer to young children, as well as not knowing how to navigate the school system.

But since 2015, Hussnia has demonstrated remarkable resolve and patience in developing important skills through the Mums and Bubs Learn English program at Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services. She first improved her spoken English before developing her English writing and reading skills. She has found the course has brought her increased confidence in communicating with people in her newly adopted home country and her trainers have described her as a natural leader in her class and her community, particularly in how she engages with newcomers who are shy or nervous, as she was when she started.

Because of her years of hard work and with her youngest child starting at primary school, Hussnia has now enrolled in the Bendigo TAFE Adult Migrant English Program as she continues to dream about further study opportunities.



## Lia Amelia Sulistyodewi

### Reynard Street Neighbourhood House

Lia arrived in Australia from Indonesia as a qualified accountant. Although she excelled in English language studies at university in Indonesia and lived briefly in the United States, Lia initially found it difficult to interact with English first-language speakers in her new home of Melbourne. On top of this, she was supporting her husband to complete his studies and looking after two young daughters, including helping them with their remote schoolwork through the last 18 months, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to cease in-person learning for long periods.

During this time, Lia showed remarkable dedication and time management so she could participate in the Intermediate, Conversation and Reading and Writing classes at Reynard Street Neighbourhood House, working toward her dream of going to university in Australia. One component of these Learn Local classes is to support learners wanting to sit the IELTS exam, an English language proficiency test often required for entry to Australian universities. Using class time but also much of her own personal time to study, Lia achieved an outstanding exam score and was accepted to RMIT to study a Graduate Certificate in the booming field of Data Science.

# Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Learner (Skills for work) Award

This award recognises the achievements of adult Victorians that have developed the core skills they needed for work. The award will go to a learner, who has achieved at least one of the following, as a result of their participation in one or more ACFE Board funded pre-accredited programs (Learn Local courses) in 2020: Developed the employability and digital skills, and/or the literacy, numeracy and English language skills they needed to get a job, and/or reskilled and/or upskilled (including within their current workplace/job), as workplace requirements change, and to keep pace with innovation, disruption and industry transition.

The learner will have established pathways for themselves into employment (including within their current workplace/job). They will have demonstrated a high level of engagement with their learning and will have been actively developing new skills and enhancing their knowledge.

The learner will demonstrate a commitment to continuing their learning journey and be a role model for other people exemplifying what can be achieved by participating in a Learn Local course.

The winner of this award will receive \$5000. Up to 3 finalists for this award will each receive \$1000.





## Mariam Yacoub Ibrahim

### Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre

Mariam arrived in Australia in 2015 after eight years living in a refugee camp in Sudan. She always had a dream of pursuing education because she loves learning but saw it as a gradual journey – and one that she has only just begun. This is why she initially studied a breadth of courses through Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre, including improving her skills in numeracy, listening, speaking, reading and writing English.

In 2020, Mariam undertook three Learn Local courses in conversation, fluency in reading and the Pathways program, which helped her to identify her learning goals and design a plan on how to achieve them. She has shown incredible devotion to her studies by taking on additional classes, including a second conversation class each week and working one-on-one with a mentor.

This year, she enrolled in English language courses incorporating digital literacy as well as the Skills for Work and Study Community Services course. These targeted skills were instrumental in Mariam securing a job as a Health Concierge with Cohealth, a not-for-profit organisation that has been crucial in providing information, advice and direct care for Melbourne residents in order to keep them safe from COVID-19. Mariam has helped culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Melbourne's north-west throughout the pandemic, particularly in ensuring they have the most up-to-date information about health guidelines available in their native languages.



## Zunera Najam

### Community College Gippsland

During her childhood in Pakistan and Kuwait, Zunera never considered that she would have a chance to gain an education, and fully expected to follow her mother into the role of a primary carer, wife and homemaker. But when she moved to Australia, she began to envision a different path for herself – one that involved elements of her love of cooking. Zunera enrolled in the Kickstart Your Career in Health course at Community College Gippsland (CCG). The Learn Local course includes core literacy, numeracy and digital skills as well as 3 accredited units relating to food hygiene, infection control and first aid.

Zunera briefly fell behind in the course at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when her immunocompromised son could no longer attend childcare and she had to provide at-home care herself. But she amazed her trainers when she caught up several weeks' worth of work and asked to re-join the class.

She has meticulous attention to detail and a desire to succeed, which was demonstrated by excellent course results and rapidly improving English conversation skills. She didn't stop there and completed a course in Food Safety Supervision as well.

Despite a lack of work history, her well-prepared resume impressed employers, and she eventually gained employment as a Catering Assistant at West Gippsland Healthcare Group. Though Zunera and her family didn't have any community in the town, she had a goal to assimilate into the local community and proved successful in doing so.

Recently Zunera has moved to Melbourne and has been able to find another position as a cook and educator with Expeditions Early Learning Journey.



## Than Tun Win

### Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

As a mature-aged student, Than had worked previously in Australia, but he knew little about his working rights and responsibilities, including how to organise his tax and superannuation fund. Having never had a chance to study any numeracy skills prior to moving to Australia, he found it frustrating when he initially struggled to understand some of the course's content and he found it difficult to focus in class.

However, through the targeted numeracy units of the inaugural Starting Work in Australia – Karen Engineering course at Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS), Than realised that he had a natural flair for mathematics. After this, his confidence and interpersonal skills grew quickly and he became more engaged in his studies, even assisting other students with their work.

Than has now started a welding apprenticeship and his engagement in learning has driven his re-cent rapid improvement in his English skills through the weekly Men's English classes at LCMS. His example of commitment as a mature-aged student has also motivated a lot of Karen community's youth in Bendigo to join in the second year of LCMS's Karen Engineering course.

# Victorian Learn Local Leadership Award

This award recognises the outstanding leadership and contribution of Learn Local coordinators, program managers and other staff to the Learn Local sector. This award will go to an individual that was involved in the administration, planning and/or coordination of an ACFE Board funded training and/or program/s\* in 2020.

The winner will demonstrate strong leadership skills and their willingness to go above and beyond to ensure that learners develop the skills they need for study, work and life. Their contribution may be a new innovation, a new or revised ACFE Board funded training and/or program, a new approach to

engaging learners, or to improve professional practice deemed to be 'above and beyond' the everyday, with a significant and positive impact on the learner/s. The contribution may also have a long-lasting impact within the Learn Local provider, their local community and/or the Learn Local sector.

This individual will be a role model for colleagues and exemplify the dedication of Learn Local coordinators, program managers and staff. The winner of this award will receive \$5000. Up to 3 finalists for this award will each receive \$1000.



## Philippa Caris

### Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre

Philippa has 30 years of experience in the adult and community education sector and has been the Manager at the Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre (GEALC) since 2011. She is driven to create positive learning environments by looking after the wellbeing of staff and students and developing connections to other social organisations within the community.

Her work at GEALC has focused on meeting the needs of the diverse migrant community in the Glen Eira area, with 335 students currently enrolled in a range of courses at the Learning Centre. She has fostered connections with a range of community, not-for-profit and government organisations that have partnered with GEALC to deliver meaningful training to learners in areas such as employment assistance, health services and tax and banking help.

Philippa's leadership skills were on display when the COVID-19 pandemic created initial disruptions for Learn Local providers offering adult education courses. She reacted quickly by implementing a digital learning and engagement strategy. A key measure was a joint grant application with Glen Eira Council and other local community houses for the creation of an iPad loan program. This allowed learners to transition smoothly to online learning. For those without online access, Philippa arranged other support. She established weekly Zoom meetings for staff, email newsletters to keep learners engaged in learning and socialising and arranged for regular check-ins for those without online access.



## Rana Tbaileh

### **Banksia Gardens Community Services**

Despite moving to Australia in 2009 as a skilled migrant with an impressive career in her native Palestine, working in government and as a university lecturer in Chemical Engineering, Rana initially struggled to adapt to life and find work in her new country. She applied to work at Banksia Gardens Community Services (BGCS) and soon thrived in roles in which she could use her experiences in teaching, her passion for lifelong learning and her desire to help new parents with young children like her own.

Rana is currently the Training and Employment Manager at BGCS, which runs 17 Learn Local courses. She also maintains a teaching role in BGCS's English as Another Language course, enjoying helping her class tailored for unemployed, underemployed and newly arrived migrants.

As Training Manager, she has played a significant role in expanding the number and variety of courses along with the number of learners accessing them at BGCS. From 1,200 student contact hours a decade ago, BGCS had 55,000 student contact hours in 2021. At the same time, Rana has sought to improve the quality of courses by introducing evaluation measures for each course and by focusing on team-building exercises to create a tight-knit group of teachers



## Rebecca Smith

### Kensington Neighbourhood House

After 10 years in the corporate and banking sector and time running her own yoga teaching business, Rebecca moved into coordinating vocational training at the CAE. This in turn led to developing pre-accredited courses for Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH), where she has worked since 2014.

Rebecca introduced classes in digital literacy and English as an Additional Language that aligned course content with participants' employment aspirations. This included KNH's first social media course and an English course centred on communication skills required for learners who were preparing to study a Certificate III in Childcare. She values industry and community engagement. Over the years, she has brokered partnerships with Gowrie Victoria, Linfox, and Service Stars Community Jobs Alliance to provide pre-accredited training linked directly to employment in different sectors.

In 2020 Rebecca designed and implemented "Thriving Families" – a Family Learning Partnership Program supporting local Somali-Australian mothers to continue their learning journeys. Thriving Families provided a positive educational impact on the entire family; pathways to further education and training; and improved family learning in Kensington through partnerships, efficient use of community resources and sharing of ideas. Thriving Families was essential to maintaining community morale and strengthening relationships with learners throughout Melbourne's extended lockdown.

# Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Trainer Award

This award recognises the outstanding contribution that all Learn Local trainers\* make to support learners in developing their skills for study, work and life.

The award will go to an individual that taught an ACFE Board funded pre-accredited program (Learn Local course) at a registered Learn Local provider in 2020.

The winner will demonstrate a strong commitment to the Learn Local sector and an ability to engage people in learning (in the classroom, online or both). They will have strategies and techniques in place that enable them to provide or support quality training to meet

different learner needs and establish pathways for them to further education and/or employment (paid or unpaid).

This individual will be a role model for colleagues and exemplify the dedication of Learn Local trainers.

The winner of this award will receive \$5000. Up to 3 finalists for this award will each receive \$1000.





## Antonio Senese

### **Prahran Community Learning Centre Inc.**

As a professional freelance and commission artist, Antonio (Tony's) career has included working in the areas of fine arts, sculpture and creating TV sets. However, he found these pursuits to be isolating and lacking an element that he sees as being vital to art: community and a sense of sharing knowledge and ideas with others.

Tony began teaching art classes at Prahran Community Learning Centre in 2009 and currently teaches six classes, including Introduction to Art, Advanced Fine Arts and Design Concepts. He also teaches Inclusive Arts, which is tailored for people with a disability, mental health illness, the unemployed and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Melbourne's Eastern suburbs.

Tony has a natural verve for teaching and is motivated to show learners how empowering it can be to be able to express yourself artistically. But he is also focused on teaching his class artistic technique and setting them on a continual learning journey through the numerous art pathways available at the Learning Centre and beyond.

In his twelve years at the Learning Centre, Tony has discovered that his love of teaching and seeing his learners develop inspires his own art when he retreats to his own creative space.



## Phuong To

### **YouthNow Inc.**

After graduating with an engineering qualification, Phuong struggled to find work in his field and first attended YouthNow in 2018 to refine his job-seeking skills. Since then, he has shown remarkable development to impress his trainers and become a learning facilitator at the Learn Local provider in Melbourne's western suburb of Sunshine.

YouthNow first employed Phuong as a receptionist. It wasn't long before YouthNow noticed that Phuong had a natural talent for explaining complex mathematical and science concepts to learners due to his tutoring background. After this, YouthNow employed him to run his own course that focused on introducing other learners to mathematics and sciences as it applies to the growing digital technology industry.

Throughout 2020, Phuong's role as a learning facilitator saw him navigate YouthNow's transition to an entirely online form of training delivery. In particular, he was instrumental in understanding that youth in the area were unresponsive to Zoom-style platforms and preferred learning through interactive and collaborative platforms related to gaming. He also quickly upskilled other YouthNow staff to use new digital technologies when COVID-19-related restrictions required them to transition to online training.



## Robyn Matthews

### Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

Robyn's personal experiences of growing up in an ethnically diverse community in Brisbane and working as a migrant in Asia have driven her desire to help people to settle into new communities. She is passionate about giving opportunities to new migrants and refugees in the areas of education and employment.

Having taught English in six different countries, Robyn joined Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS) in 2019 as their lead English as Another Language teacher. She has developed innovative approaches to adult education with a heavy focus on student-led learning, including conversation classes themed to suit the particular interests of the learners and creating flexible learning environments for learners with different needs. Another successful project was the online "Multicultural Storytime",

a series of language exchange sessions where women would read stories in their own languages in order to share their culture and language and promote a sense of pride within the multicultural community.

Perhaps most impressive of all, she designed the pilot Starting Work in Australia - Karen Engineering Studies program. This program provides bilingual support to the Karen community in the Greater Bendigo area to help learners transition to study a Certificate II in Engineering Studies at Bendigo TAFE. The skills that learners were taught included targeted numeracy and conversational English focused on the workplace, as well as how to look for work and organise tax and superannuation.



## Jodie Whitehurst

### Williamstown Community and Education Centre

Jodie is a dedicated teacher of English as an Additional Language (EAL) to adults from diverse cultural backgrounds. She utilises innovative, artistic strategies to enhance learners' language skills and confidence.

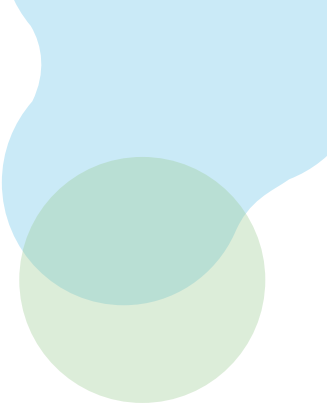
Formerly a secondary school drama teacher, Jodie is passionate about incorporating performative drama and music techniques into the language learning process. Her learners develop communication skills by participating in both improvised and scripted drama activities and collaborating to write song lyrics. Jodie also creates opportunities for her students to engage with the wider community through public performances.

Jodie has made significant contributions to the Learn Local sector by sharing her knowledge and research in this field. In addition to writing articles and facilitating professional development, she has established an online forum for teachers to share best practice. During COVID lockdowns, she wrote and recorded uplifting songs to inspire her students to stay positive and connected, which were shared and used widely throughout the sector.

Through her performative approach, Jodie has found that her learners retain new language more easily by using it in rhythmic, embodied and meaningful contexts. Additionally, the environment of trust built through these collaborative artistic projects has empowered her students to develop stronger voices in the community.



**Victorian Learn Local  
Pre-accredited Program Award  
(For small providers)**



This award recognises the outstanding ACFE Board funded pre-accredited programs (Learn Local courses) that are delivered by the Learn Local sector.

The winning Learn Local program will be a pre-accredited program that can demonstrate the creation of pathways for learners to further education, training and/or employment (paid or volunteer), as a result of their participation in the program.

The program will demonstrate the calibre of programs that the Learn Local sector delivers and its expertise in supporting learners to engage or re-engage with learning and develop the core skills they need for study, work and life.

It will be an exemplar of an approach to program development, design and/or delivery that reflects the particular pedagogy and approaches that characterise the work of the Learn Local sector.

The winner of this award in both the small and large provider categories will receive \$10,000. Up to three finalists for this award in both the small and large provider categories will each receive \$1,000.



## Starting Work in Australia – Karen Engineering Studies

### Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

The course provides bilingual support and industry-focused language and numeracy training to students from the Karen community undertaking their Certificate II in Engineering studies at Bendigo TAFE, with the goal to help learners transition to job-specific further education and training or employment.

Inspired by leaders at Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS) and leveraging their strong community and industry links, they uncovered the areas of greatest skills shortage in the Bendigo area – welding and sheet metal engineering.

Trainers noticed providing comprehensive support tailored to the cultural and language needs of learners resulted in many discovering an aptitude for the mathematics component of the course and quickly absorbing the lessons on employment skills.

Now, with increasing demand among both Karen youth and older adults in Bendigo's Karen community, a second year of the program is being organised.

The program's success saw 10 of the 12 students gain employment in related fields after the course, with five of them commencing apprenticeships and two school-aged students being encouraged to return to study after previously dropping out of school. Many of the graduates currently in employment and training aspire to progress enough to join their classmates in studying a Certificate III apprenticeship in Engineering Studies at Bendigo TAFE.



## Contemporary Cakes and Small Business

### Zoe Support Australia

This program is tailored for young mothers between the ages of 13 and 25 in the Mildura region, many of whom experience social disadvantage. Since 2018, the program has provided 51 women an accessible entry point to the hospitality industry through baking, cake decorating and other life skills.

Until early 2020, learners trained in baking and cake decorating onsite at the popular local café joined to the Little Sprouts Op Shop. Trainers taught industry-specific modules such as baking and food hygiene, but also fused literacy and numeracy skills into tasks where students read recipes and calculated ingredient measurements. As students gained confidence, they were encouraged to bake products for sale at the café.

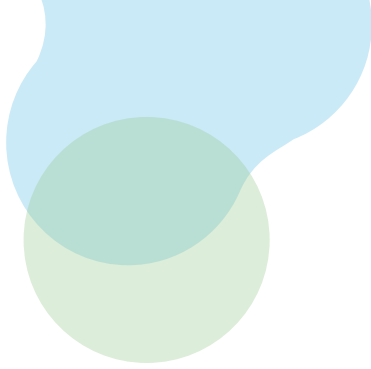
At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program adapted quickly to deliver ingredient packages to learners' homes and arrange for video lessons, and even increased the number of participants to a record high of 22.

The success of the program has led to 11 participants moving on to complete accredited courses such as a Certificate IV in Community Services and a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care. Eight other participants have gained work after the program, while 10 others are currently studying an accredited course.



**Victorian Learn Local  
Pre-accredited Program Award  
(For large providers)**





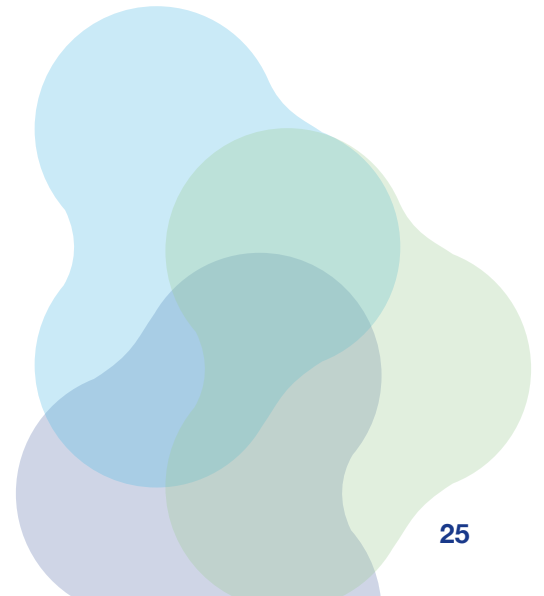
This award recognises the outstanding ACFE Board funded pre-accredited programs (Learn Local courses) that are delivered by the Learn Local sector.

The winning Learn Local program will be a pre-accredited program that can demonstrate the creation of pathways for learners to further education, training and/or employment (paid or volunteer), as a result of their participation in the program.

The program will demonstrate the calibre of programs that the Learn Local sector delivers and its expertise in supporting learners to engage or re-engage with learning and develop the core skills they need for study, work and life.

It will be an exemplar of an approach to program development, design and/or delivery that reflects the particular pedagogy and approaches that characterise the work of the Learn Local sector.

The winner of this award in both the small and large provider categories will receive \$10,000. Up to three finalists for this award in both the small and large provider categories will each receive \$1,000.





## Our Kitchen Social Enterprise

### Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre

Since its inception in 2017, Ballarat's Our Kitchen Social Enterprise (OKSE) has offered an introduction to commercial-grade hospitality to diverse learners, including new migrants and refugees, women, the unemployed and underemployed.

Despite having reduced class sizes due to the density limits imposed by COVID-19 social restrictions, the OKSE programs offered four courses to 59 students. Courses had a varied focus, with some emphasising improving literacy or English-speaking skills and others refining learners' industry-specific skills to increase their employability.

To remain open in the pandemic, the program took an innovative approach by trying to solve another community problem of food insecurity with dedicated

training of participants. The program started a free meals program on days where there were service gaps, which gave learners exposure to rapid output of high-volume meals. This skill set is highly sought after in commercial kitchens since it requires incredible teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills.

OKSE's learners achieved great success, serving over 7,000 meals throughout the year to people in need. Many of 2020's graduates have moved on to begin accredited courses in hospitality, started their own culinary business, gained work in the local hospitality sector or gained work in other industries with their transferable skill sets.



## Catering for Success

### The Basin Community House Inc.

The Catering for Success course is a gateway to a career in the hospitality industry. The course trains adults living with a disability in preliminary skills related to cooking, catering, coffee and customer service. By the end of the course, the hope is that learners are trained to begin working at the associated 'Tasty Az' catering social enterprise. The program also infuses literacy and numeracy skills into technical lessons.

Learners receive training in a cooking school commercial kitchen at Tasty Az and a café within a local arts centre. For the first time this year, students have catered for community events and corporate functions at the Community House. While this opportunity was daunting at first, being able to work through the catering, food service and customer service requirements at these events gave learners a sense of achievement and newfound confidence.

Students who have completed the course this year have gained employment in Tasty Az's new café at Burrinja Cultural Arts Centre and other local hospitality businesses, while one student has gone on to complete an accredited Certificate IV in Disability.



## Micro Business Program

### Centre for Participation

The Micro Business Program trains students specifically to start their own craft or culinary enterprise but also gives them general employability skills. It is targeted toward women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and this year featured 19 students from 15 different ethnic communities.

The areas covered by the program include market research, marketing and branding, digital and social media, applying for an ABN and business insurance, food handling skills, customer service and barista skills.

Participants are also linked with opportunities of hands-on work experience at the Centre for Participation's kitchen and Social Pantry mobile food van, both of which provide meals to vulnerable community members. Along with this, participants have gained work experience at numerous events that have supported local community and other not-for-profit organisations during the pandemic.

Of the 19 participants, two went on to further education and training while 12 have secured full-time or part-time work in hospitality, food preparation and barista roles as well as other industries.

# Victorian Learn Local Innovation Award

This award recognises an innovative solution that was developed by a registered Learn Local provider as a response to a local training challenge or community need. The innovative solution could be a new or revised ACFE Board funded program, project or activity\*.

The innovative solution will demonstrate how the Learn Local sector provides flexible, innovative, quality and tailored training that meets the needs of learners in their community. It will highlight the ways that Learn Local providers proactively think outside the box to encourage and enable learning opportunities for learners to develop their skills for study, work and life.

The innovative solution will be learner focused and may have required the Learn Local provider to change the way they usually worked to ensure the local training challenge or community need was met.

Examples of this local training challenge or community need may include, but are not limited to: the Victorian bushfires; remote and rural learning; the COVID-19 pandemic and other relevant challenges.

The winner of this award will receive \$10,000. Up to three finalists for this award will each receive \$1000.



## Micro Business for Makers

### Bridge Darein

After the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of the Thornbury Makers Market in Melbourne's northern suburbs in March 2020, Bridge Darein quickly noted that the creative community would be vulnerable without access to artistic studio sites or an outlet to sell their wares.

The Micro Business for Makers program aims to upskill craftspeople and artists with the business skills to better protect their ability to earn a living through selling their art. Bridge Darein engaged experienced artists in the community and other facilitators to teach skills associated with small commercial art markets. These skills ranged from social media and online selling, how to approach retail art galleries and shops, writing a business plan, applying for an ABN and public liability insurance and branding and marketing.

The program has proven remarkably successful, with 90 per cent of the 46 students who have taken part now having launched their own online stores. 30 of the makers also participated in Bridge Darein's 'Heart of Thornbury' online market, where many of them sold pieces of their artwork. Plans are also underway to complement this program with a dedicated social media strategy short course.



## Starting Work in Australia – Karen Engineering Studies

### Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

The Starting Work in Australia - Karen Engineering Studies program is also entered in the Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Program Award (For small providers) and Victorian Learn Local Partnership Award categories.

The program was inspired by leaders at Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS) noticing a strong desire among youth in the Karen community to learn more about studying a trade. They drew on research that showed the economic and social benefits that migrants and refugees bring to regional areas and leveraged their strong community and industry links to uncover the areas of greatest skills shortage in the Bendigo area – welding and sheet metal engineering.

Realising that low English language literacy was a barrier to learning for many of the Karen community members interested in studying a trade, LCMS collaborated with Bendigo TAFE and local JobActive centres to design a course that combined bilingual support and targeted numeracy and employment skills to support participants as they studied a Certificate II in Engineering Studies at Bendigo TAFE. The course also provided support for students beyond the program, to prepare for work and to pursue further vocational education or employment opportunities.



## Conversation and Reading Café Class

### Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council

Designed to address a need in the Mildura region for non-English speaking residents who were experiencing social isolation and with limited opportunities to practice their English speaking, the program aims to create an environment where students chat one-on-one to local volunteers in a series of ten-minute rotations, while being encouraged to speak without being corrected – all in the setting of a local café.

At the beginning and end of each class, the group debriefs together, with the teacher updating volunteers and volunteers providing feedback to the teacher. Key areas of language are discussed for individual learners and volunteers to work on in future classes.

The program design was inspired by recent research that shows that immersion and speaking to a large number and variety of people are keys to effectively learning a spoken language.

Since it began in early 2020, the program has become so popular that it now has a waiting list and looks set to add some night-time class options. In the last year, learners have visibly grown in confidence and their language fluency, with seven securing work and further study after completing their first year of the class.



## Family Learning Partnership

### Wellsprings for Women

The Family Learning Partnership program by Wellsprings for Women recognised that it had to adopt new bespoke strategies to connect with marginalised women and their children from migrant and refugee backgrounds in the Dandenong and Casey areas.

The program allows mothers to bring their children to small group classes so they can attend without the need to find alternative care arrangements. In most classes, the women and children are given English language and digital literacy lessons separately, with a quarter of classes conducted with women and children together.

Wellsprings for Women realised the need to advertise the program through its service providers network and encouraged direct referrals into the program.

During periods of COVID-19 lockdowns, Wellsprings for Women quickly conducted a needs analysis and used its community networks to source laptops and Wi-Fi dongles where they were required, also providing food and material aid like nappies and toiletries.

Trainers have been encouraged by the remarkable retention rate within the class, which is a testament to the resolve and patience of the participants. Most encouraging of all, this entry point has seen many mothers and children enrol in further Learn Local courses covering English, employment skills, digital literacy and parenting.

# Victorian Learn Local Partnership Award

This award recognises a partnership between a Learn Local provider and at least one other organisation that has resulted in improved pathways from ACFE Board funded pre-accredited training to accredited training and/or work.

The approach taken by both parties to the partnership will have resulted in them working together to achieve a shared goal and in some instances, they may have had to change the way they usually work to ensure the success of the partnership. There will be demonstrable achievements and training impacts as a result of the partnership.

The sustainability of the partnership will be evident from the plans that are in place for the future as well as an indication of how the partnership could be replicated or adopted in other settings.

The partnership will demonstrate how Learn Local providers and other organisations/sectors can work together to improve pathway opportunities for learners.

The winner of this award will receive \$10,000 (to be shared by all parties). Up to three finalists for this award will each receive \$1000 (to be shared by all parties).





## Partnerships in Action

### The Basin Community House Inc.

This innovative partnership brings together three Learn Local providers, two job centres and the Department of Justice and Community Safety. It has been designed specifically to address the need for criminal offenders to complete Community Work Orders despite social restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Learn Local providers cover a large geographical area in Melbourne's outer-eastern suburbs of Doveton, The Basin and Pakenham. The program facilitates pre-accredited training in areas such as employment skills, time management, planning and problem-solving. Both during and after the course, the 400 applicants who completed it were able to access career development resources at Swinburne Skills and Job Centre and Chisholm Skills and Jobs Centre.

Organisers of this program at Learn Local providers have been astonished by the progress of participants in a community learning setting in which they are introduced to other participants and are included in Learn Local networks. Since many have faced the stigma of being offenders in the past, the Partnership views this service delivery model as a sustainable one that could continue to run once in-person learning becomes the norm again after social restrictions in Melbourne ease.



## Starting Work in Australia – Karen Engineering Studies

### Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

The Starting Work in Australia - Karen Engineering Studies program is also entered in the Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Program Award (For small providers) and Victorian Learn Local Innovation Award categories.

The program was a partnership between the Learn Local provider Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, Bendigo Jobs and Skills Centre, the Matchworks and Peoples Plus Job Active centres, Bendigo Senior Secondary College, and the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Running between February 2020 and December 2020, the partnership operated as a remote working group during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bendigo TAFE and LCMS collaborated to ensure that teaching material was tailored for the class cohort, while two local JobActive providers provided funding for at-home learning packs and scholarships as LCMS compiled the content of the packs. LCMS also provided in-class bilingual support workers with funding support from the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet.



## 15th Anniversary Honour Roll

**Winners from every Learn Local Awards since they began in 2006!**

### 2006

**Outstanding ACE Learner** – Stella Lado (AMES)

**Outstanding ACE Teacher/Tutor** – Louisa Vale (Bright Adult Education Inc)

**Innovation in ACE Learning** – DIY Housing, Southern Grampians Adult Education

**Outstanding ACE Organisation** – The Centre for Continuing Education, Wangaratta

**Outstanding ACE Koorie Achievement** – Licence Program, Mildura Aboriginal Corporation

### 2007

**Outstanding ACE Learner** – Joshua Gibbons (Preston Reservoir Adult and Community Education)

**Outstanding ACE Teacher/Tutor** – Debra Vallely (Preston Reservoir Adult and Community Education)

**Innovation in ACE Learning** – Partners of Tomorrow program (Springvale Community Centre)

**Outstanding ACE Organisation** – Diamond Valley Learning Centre

**Outstanding ACE Koorie Achievement** – Mirrimbeena Aboriginal Education Group

**Best outcomes from research by an ACE organisation** – Workforce Plus

**Excellence in non-accredited teaching and learning** – Gayle Harrison (Yackandandah Community Education Network)

### 2008

**Outstanding ACE Learner** – Judy McDonald (The Avenue Neighbourhood House and North Ringwood Community House)

**Outstanding ACE Practitioner** – Sue Paull (Diamond Valley Learning Centre) and Wayne Baker (BEST Youthworks, Ballarat)

**Innovation in ACE Learning** – Mount Beauty Neighbourhood Centre

**Outstanding Koorie Achievement in ACE** – Phillip Perry (Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation)

**Outstanding ACE Organisation** – Southern Grampians Adult Education

### 2009

**Outstanding ACE Learner** – Diem Nguyen (Sussex Neighbourhood House)

**Outstanding ACE Practitioner** – George Katsikas (Living & Learning Nillumbik)

**Innovation in ACE Learning** – Beechworth Neighbourhood Centre

**Outstanding Pre-accredited Program Design and Delivery** – Eastwork Employment Inc

**Outstanding Koorie Achievement in ACE** – Education Centre Gippsland

**Outstanding ACE Organisation** – Sandybeach Centre

### 2010

**Outstanding ACE Learner** – Joanna Weeku (Werribee Community and Education Centre)

**Outstanding ACE Practitioner** – Pam Hullin (Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE))

**Innovation in ACE Learning** – Gippsland Employment Skills Training

**Outstanding Pre-accredited Program Design and Delivery** – Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre

**Outstanding Koorie Achievement in ACE** – Dwana Farrall (Continuing Education Bendigo)

**Outstanding ACE Organisation** – YNH Services

## 2011

**Outstanding Learner** – Jessica McKenzie (Diamond Valley Learning Centre)

**Outstanding Practitioner** – Amy Baillie (Meadow Heights Learning Shop)

**Outstanding Organisation** – Wyndham Community and Education Centre

**Outstanding Koorie Achievement** – Wimmera HUB

**Outstanding Pre-accredited Program** – Moe Life Skills Community Centre

**Innovation in Learning** – Upper Yarra Community House

## 2012

**Outstanding Learner** – Tha-Hser Bleh Deh (Nhill Neighbourhood House Learning Centre)

**Outstanding Practitioner** – Angie Zerella (Living and Learning Nillumbik)

**Outstanding Organisation** – St Kilda Youth Services

**Outstanding Koorie Achievement** – The Deadly Ute Project (Wimmera HUB)

**Outstanding Pre-accredited Program** – Community Futures – Step up to Community Work (Jesuit Community College)

**Innovation in Learning** – Tools for Trade (Brotherhood of St Laurence)

## 2013

**Outstanding Pre-accredited Learner** – Michelle Jenkins (Traralgon Neighbourhood Learning House)

**Outstanding Pathways Program** – Six Steps to Employment (Clean Up Gang) (Continuing Education Bendigo)

**Outstanding Practitioner** – Simone Dawson (SkillsPlus)

**Excellence in Creating Local Solutions** – Uni4U (MACE)

**Excellence in Language, Literacy and Numeracy Provision** – Jill Lewis (CAE)

**Learn Local for Business** – Veritech Hume in partnership with Wyndham Community and Education Centre

**Learn Local Legends** – Cloverdale Community Centre, Coonara Community House, Haddon and District Community House, Prahran Community Learning Centre, Traralgon Neighbourhood Learning House, Wingate Avenue Community Centre, Wycheproof Community Resource Centre, YNH Services

## 2014

**Outstanding Learner** – Lisa Stimson (LINK Neighbourhood House, Kaniva)

**Outstanding Practitioner** – Tony Senese (Prahran Community Learning Centre Inc)

**Outstanding Pathways Program** – Emerging Cultural Leaders Program (Footscray Community Arts Centre)

**Excellence in Creating Local Solutions** – Wyndam Community and Education Centre

**Innovation in Digital Literacy** – Traralgon Neighbourhood House

**Learn Local for Business** – Kyabram Community and Learning Centre

**Learn Local Legends** – Noweyung, Southern Grampians Adult Education, Sandybeach Centre, Campaspe College of Adult Education (CCA), Upper Yarra Community House, Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre, Shepparton Access, Kensington Neighbourhood House

## 2015

**Outstanding Pre-accredited Learner** – Karen Hokai (East End Community House)

**Outstanding Practitioner** – Karen Fleischer (Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre)

**Outstanding Pathways Program** – Creating Pathways into the Community (Shepparton Access)

**Excellence in Creating Local Solutions** – BizE Centre (YouthNow)

**AMES Australia Diversity Innovation** – Job Ready, Lifestyle and Karen Language programs (Nhill Learning Centre)

**Learn Local for Business** – Barker Trailers and Kyneton Community and Learning Centre

**Learn Local Legends** – Portland Workskills, Pines Learning, Buchan Neighbourhood House, Meredith Community Centre, Pangerang Community House, Kyneton Community and Learning Centre, Wyndham Community and Education Centre, Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre

## 2016

**The Ro Allen Award – Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence** – Matthew Agostinelli (Diamond Valley Learning Centre)

**Outstanding Practitioner** – Marj Sjostrom (Keysborough Learning Centre)

**Outstanding Pathways Program** – Speaking Out (Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre)

**Excellence in Creating Local Solutions** – BA@Wyndham (Wyndham Community and Education Centre)

**AMES Australia Diversity Innovation** – CALD Education & Employment Pathways (Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre)

**Learn Local Legends** – Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services, Macedon Ranges Further Education, Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre, Gippsland Employment Skills Training, Vermont South Community House, Myrtleford Neighbourhood Centre, Nhill Learning Centre, Bellarine Living & Learning Centre

## 2017

**The Ro Allen Award – Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence** – Christie Sinclair (Banksia Gardens Community Services)

**Outstanding Practitioner** – Lachlan McKenzie (Jesuit Community College)

**Outstanding Pathways Program** – Try a Trade (Diversitat)

**Excellence in Creating Local Solutions** – Linking Learning to the Land (Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre)

**AMES Australia Diversity Innovation** – Paw Po Products Community Enterprise, Nhill Learning Centre

**Learn Local Volunteer Champions** – Harry Ashton (Rushworth Community House), Joy Ferguson (Diamond Valley Learning Centre), Melinda Hamilton (Springvale Neighbourhood House)

**Learn Local Legends** – Banksia Gardens Community Services, Echuca Neighbourhood House, Dandenong Neighbourhood House, Milpara Community House, Mountain District Learning Centre, The Centre for Continuing Education, Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre, Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre

## 2018

**The Ro Allen Award – Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence** – David Hayes (Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre)

**Victorian Learn Local Young Pre-accredited Learner Award** – Aymee Schofield (Noweyung Ltd)

**Victorian Learn Local Practitioner Award** – Robyn Spandonide (Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services)

**Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Pathway Program Award** – Prepare for Work – Service Stars (Kensington Neighbourhood House)

**Victorian Learn Local Creating Local Solutions Award** – Kick-Start your Career in Health (Noweyung Ltd)

**Victorian Learn Local Collaboration Award** – Manningham Learns – A Strategic Alliance: Pines Learning, Park Orchards Community House and Learning Centre and Living and Learning @ Ajani

**Learn Local Legends** – Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE), Bendigo Neighbourhood Hub, Springvale Learning and Activities Centre (SLAC), Heyfield Community Resource Centre, Glen Park Community Centre Inc, Tatura Community House, Nhill Neighbourhood House, Diversitat

## 2019

**The Ro Allen Award – Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence** – Chithrika Senanayake (Wellsprings for Women)

**Victorian Learn Local Young Pre-accredited Learner Award** – Rory Madden (Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre Inc)

**Victorian Learn Local Practitioner Award** – Josie Rose (Noweyung Ltd)

**Victorian Learn Local Volunteer Team Award** – Women Connect Hotspot Office Volunteers (Phillip Island Community & Learning Centre)

**Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Pathway Program Award** – Creative Enterprising Women Program (Wellsprings for Women)

**Victorian Learn Local Creating Local Solutions Award** – Moon rabbit “bridges” the gap (The Bridge)

**Victorian Learn Local Collaboration Award** – Kinglake Ranges Employment and Enterprise Program (Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House & Ellimatta Youth Inc)

**Learn Local Legends** – Carringbush Adult Education, Access Australia Group, Wellsprings for Women, Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre, Cire Services, Albury Wodonga Resource Bureau, Bacchus Marsh Community College, Cloverdale Community Centre

## 2020

**The Ro Allen Award – Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence** – Colleen Forbes (Community College Gippsland)

**Victorian Learn Local Young Pre-accredited Learner Award** – Bryanna Paynter-Harvie (Noweyung)

**Victorian Learn Local Practitioner Award** – Vivian Della Valle (CAE)

**Victorian Learn Local Volunteer Team Award** – Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre

**Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Pathway Program Award** – Getting There (The Centre for Continuing Education)

**Victorian Learn Local Creating Local Solutions Award** – Kick Start your Career in the Health Industry (Heyfield Community Resource Centre)

**Victorian Learn Local Collaboration Award** – Cloverdale Community Centre, The Gordon TAFE Collaboration

### People's Choice

**Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Pathway Program** – Getting There (The Centre for Continuing Education)

**Victorian Learn Local Creating Local Solutions** – Cultural Cuisines (Wellsprings for Women)

**Victorian Learn Local Collaboration** – Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre Inc & Burke and Beyond

**Innovation in a time of COVID Acknowledgement Award – Learn Local practitioner/individual** – Leslie Snart (Laverton Community Education Centre), Learn Local program – Digital Matters Program (Phillip Island Community and Learning Centre (PICAL)), Learn Local providers – Wellsprings for Women and Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre



## Acknowledgements

### **Gorgi Coghlan** **Master of Ceremonies**

Gorgi's diverse experience in journalism, travel, science, music and education have made her one of the most well-rounded television presenters in the industry. For the past 10 years, Gorgi was a regular co-host on *The Project*. Gorgi is also a classically trained singer and professional stage performer. She has performed live at many prestigious events and featured twice on the 'Spirit of Christmas' albums, raising funds for The Salvation Army, as well as releasing her own solo CD. Gorgi holds a Bachelor of Science (majoring in pharmacology and zoology) and a Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary) specialising in biology and science, both from Monash University. Gorgi taught four years of secondary college from 1999 to 2003 and managed and coordinated 240 students at year levels 9, 10



and VCE. Gorgi was honoured to return to Monash and present the keynote address at the 2015 graduation ceremony. Gorgi grew up in Warrnambool, Victoria, on a sheep farm. She is a former state level equestrian competitor and currently enjoys dressage on her warmblood mare. Along with her husband and business partner, Gorgi is the proud owner of the Provincial Hotel, a landmark establishment in Ballarat. The Provincial Hotel won the 'boutique style accommodation of the year' category in the 2019 Tourism Accommodation Awards for Victoria. Gorgi has found a perfect balance currently commuting from her family farm where she lives with her husband and daughter, Molly-Rose, whilst enjoying her various media roles.

# Entertainment

## Sweethearts

The Sweethearts began 32 years ago when a group of like-minded young women got together to play soul music after school at Matthew Flinders Girls' Secondary College in Geelong. They grew to become polished and professional musicians, with their greatest breakthrough beginning when they were invited to play at the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland in 1997. As their success grew, it became apparent that different management approach was required. Research began, and the Sweethearts Foundation – a not-for-profit organisation – was formed in the year 2000. Some 20 years later the Sweethearts have carved out a well-recognised place in the professional music industry. They are well-known locally in the Geelong region, across the state of Victoria, nationally and internationally. Regularly performing at corporate events and Victorian festivals such as the Queenscliff Music Festival and the Port Fairy Folk Festival, they have a reputation for sassy neo-soul, punchy originals and great entertainment. Today, the band is made up of between 50 and 60 young women, auditioned from the local Geelong, Barwon and Western District region, including surrounding Melbourne and suburbs. The unique feature of the Sweethearts is that it constantly changes each year with new and emerging artists coming into the band and others leaving to pursue their career paths.

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